

TEMPLE WORSHIP



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Sharanagatha Dheenartha Paritharana Parayane !

Sarvasyarthi Hare Devi Narayani Namostute !!

**Salutations to you Mother, who is a Power Divine,
the saviour of the distressed and of the care-worn,**

the remover of the misery of all,

who take refuge in Thee.

O Thou, salutations to Thee.

This book is dedicated to

Goddess Sri Veeramakaliamman

*All the proceeds of the book will be donated to
Sri Veerama Kaliamman Temple.*

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This book on "Temple Worship" helps one to remove the misconceptions we have about the subject. It aims to explain the Purpose of Religion, the Concept of God, the Types of Devotees and the Proper way of Worship. By understanding the above, one is able to obtain the grace of the Lord which is available to all at all times. The Lord's grace is important as it enables one to lead a contented and peaceful life. With this publication, I pray to Sri Veeramakaliamman to bless all devotees the same. The real purpose of this book will only be achieved when a reader understands the significance and methods of worship and as a result enjoys the grace of the Lord.

R. Selvakumar

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Ishwara is considered the prime factor in one's life. Unlike other religions, the concept of Ishwara is not a mere belief but rather unique as it appeals to the mental disposition of followers ranging from the emotional (Bhakti) to the philosophical (Jnana). Mr Selvakumar of Sri Veerama Kaliyamman Temple, realized the difficulty in reading the vast Hindu scriptures and thus has consented to publish this book on "Temple Worship" as this book aims to explain briefly the important aspects of Sanatana Dharma in a nutshell. The book is published on this day, 23.9.2005, in conjunction with his 50th birthday. My sincere thanks to Mr Selvakumar who gave an opportunity to edit this publication.

My prayers to Ishwara to bless him and his family and all the volunteers who helped to publish this book, with abundance of wealth, health and prosperity.

G. Karthikeya Sivam

THE PURPOSE OF RELIGION

Introduction: *The purpose of religion is to assist an individual to lead a happy and contented life. In every religion in this world, we find certain moral principles, such as compassion and harmlessness to all creatures of the world. All these universal values are needed for the society to function in an orderly manner. All religions have their own set of doctrines too. But these doctrines when followed by the individuals should ultimately create a harmonious society.*

“Dharma” is the nearest Sanskrit word for **Religion**, though **“Dharma”** signifies much more than religion. Hinduism being the oldest living religion, hence called **“Sanathana Dharma”** means **“The Eternal Religion”**. That is why, for the Hindus, there is no difference between religion and life as spiritual life is impossible without a moral and ethical lifestyle. One can practice religion in every aspect of one’s life. Thus, Hinduism advocates a lifestyle based on *dharma*.

Scriptures : All religions derive authority from its scriptures. *Shastras* (Scriptures) which are the means of knowledge, reveal concepts beyond our perception and inference, like Dharma, Karma, Creation, Ishvara (GOD) and the way/means an individual can relate to the world and God. This understanding is very important for one to function in this universe, especially in today’s context. One may ask how do I know that what is being said in the scriptures is the TRUTH. It can only be the TRUTH since the revelation does not contradict with one’s logical reasoning and experience. So, scriptures are important in understanding how one should lead an ideal life.

Human Pursuits : Scriptures enumerate *Dharma* (Ethics), *artha* (Securities), *kama* (Comforts) and *moksha* (Freedom/Happiness) as the four main pursuits of an individual during his lifetime.

All the actions that an individual performs are primarily, for the attainment of *artha* (Securities) and *kama* (comforts). His prime concern is to attain *Artha* – securities and basic necessities in life. On attaining the same, he will naturally have *Kama* - the desire to lead a comfortable life. Though Hinduism encourages simplicity

and detachment from craving for worldly objects, it does not mean that one should live in poverty. It is obvious that *Sanathana Dhrama* recognises the importance of obtaining material wealth as it gives security & comforts in one's life which in turn reflects in the welfare of the society. *Dharma* ranks first in the pursuit of an individual because both *artha* and *kama* have to be attained in a dharmic way.

Dharma : *Dharma* means righteousness or the universal order that which holds the whole universe. Apart from the values born out of common sense in human beings, Scriptures also teach us to follow the other values like discipline lifestyle, charity, faith in *Ishvara*, studying and listening to the Scriptural teachings, austerity etc. Since dharma protects those who follow the path of dharma, it is implied that an individual will definitely lead a contented, happy and disciplined life, if their actions do not contradict with *dharmā*. In order to have universal peace and happiness, an individual's action must be aligned with the cosmic order. Hinduism advocates that by practicing *dharmā*, one is bound to experience peace, happiness and purity of mind.

While striving for **Artha** and **Kama**, scriptures teach us to perform *swadharma* (individual's duties) during the different stages of an individual's life. An individual, when interact with people, assumes and performs various roles like a daughter, sister, brother, wife, husband, mother, friend, employee, citizen etc. One should discharge his duties according to the guidelines prescribed by the scriptures and not according to his likes and dislikes. By performing one's *swadharma* with proper attitude, peace and prosperity (material as well as spiritual) can be assured in their life.

Karma : The study of scriptures and personal experience give one the knowledge to understand the theory of *Karma*. According to the law of *karma*, for every action there is reaction and this reaction (results) can be either in the form of *punya* (comfortable lifestyle) or *papa* (demerits in terms of uncomfortable lifestyle). According to our scriptures, performance of right *karmas* (actions) will give right results in terms of *punya* (merits), be it in this life or in our future births. The *punya* may fructify in the form of obtaining *artha* and *kama*, contented, happy life with full of enjoyment & pleasure and with the

right knowledge to free oneself from all the miseries of the world.

In spite of leading a dharmic life, when hardship strikes, one laments that “why must I suffer or go through this? What wrong have I done? By understanding the law of *karma*, one will stop brooding over it, as he will realize that his present situation is due to his past actions and his current actions will determine his future. He takes the responsibility of happenings in his life and stop blaming the world or God for that matter. With right knowledge coupled with *Ishvara*’s blessings, he will be motivated to do good at all times which will reduce the hardship that he goes through.

Conclusion : All actions performed by each and every human being in this world are for the attainment of a happy life. The term happiness is always subjective and depends upon the individual. In this materialistic universe, happiness means possession of objects. But even after possessing all the material wealth, we may still be unable to lead a happy life. Scriptures point out that by performing one’s *swadharma*, one will be able to discipline his mind to reduce the craving for worldly pleasures which will pave the way for inner peace - one’s true nature.

Hindu Scriptures gives solutions to all human problems while living in this world. *Sanathana Dharma* **gives the divine knowledge** to free oneself from the miseries of the world and **to lead a happy life**.

THE HINDU CONCEPT OF GOD

The concept of God, found in the Hindu Scriptures, is one that is very unique. The uniqueness lies in its appeal to the mental disposition of its followers ranging from the emotional (Bhakti) to philosophical (Jnana). This non-dogmatic vision accommodates different people with varied appreciation of religion and God. This distinctive attitude towards religion has made Hindus all over the world a harmonious and accommodating community.

All the Hindu scriptures propound the existence of a Supreme God who has created this universe that we live in. However the concept of God may vary from scripture to scripture this is not a problem because one will find harmony in them when seen in a proper light. But the one thing that is common in all scriptures is the existence of One God. However, in general Hinduism teaches two mutually related visions of God. We have to be cautious as to not misinterpret this to be two distinct concepts of Gods. We can broadly call the two visions as Ishvara (Total Cosmic Principle) and Ishta Devata (Personal God). This concept is found in most Hindu scriptures although the vision of Ishta Devata is the most accessible and therefore popular among Hindus.

Let's take a closer look at the idea of Ishta Devata, which is the most popular vision in contemporary Hinduism. Ishta means favourite and devata means deity. Hinduism allows one to have an Ishta through which we can relate with Ishvara. This Ishta is normally a Deity whose existence is traced to either a reference found in the scriptures or a revelation to a person in a particular time. In some instances the deities could have in some time walked among us. These deities could be celestials or superhuman. There are many Devatas found in our scriptures, of which Shiva, Vishnu, Sarasvati, Durga, Kali, Lakshmi, Shakti, Kartikeya and Ganesha being the most popular. Sometimes we have devotees who adore only Krishna exclusively or may be Shiva or Kartikeya or Kali as their Ishta Devata. To these devotees their Ishta Devata becomes everything to them through them they see Ishvara (GOD). Thus born are various Sampradayas (specific religious traditions) to worship Ishvara through a particular form. We

have to be careful here not to conclude that these deities have no significance. In fact, each of them play a particular role or epitomise a particular quality which helps us in understanding that One God which we worship through these forms. For example, Vishnu stands for the preservation of the Universe and Shiva being the Destructive aspect of the Universe. Brahma stands for the creative principle in the Universe. When seen in this light, we will then realize that the function of creation, preservation and destruction belongs to Ishvara, the total Cosmic Principle.

Devotees find solace from these Deities who have lordship in the role that they play, through prayer and worship. For example, Ganesha is sought for removing problems and Sarasvati is sought for education and the arts. The roles they play may overlap at times but this is allowed in the Hindu Tradition which has tremendous elasticity in its views as long as it does not contradict the definitive vision of God as Ishvara. Most monotheistic religions find this concept repulsive as the human mind is bent on trying to find a single supreme being. But the Hindus find it all so beautiful to appreciate the diversity in the various deities and the Unity in Ishvara. This reflects the absence of a 'one size fits all vision' of seeing God. With this liberal outlook, Hinduism is a religion with many Deities, each playing a role in the Universe with a total sum of its roles being Ishvara. This can be likened to the relationship between the waves and the ocean, with waves being the various deities and the Ocean being Ishvara.

Proceeding from the idea of God as an Ishta Devata, we shall now examine the concept of Ishvara. This is the ultimate standpoint of the Hindu scriptures where God is seen as the Totality which pervades every atom in the Universe. Sometimes Ishvara is also referred to as Brahman. This Reality is understood with many definitions such as Absolute Reality, Infinity, Changeless, Genderless and Eternal. However, this vision which is unique to the Hindus does not contradict the earlier concept of Ishta Devata because the concept of Ishvara will inevitably qualify it to be a principle that pervades each and every form i.e. Devatas. So in reality every form that we worship is indeed pervaded by Ishvara. The Vedas proclaim "Everything is Brahman". So it is immaterial whether what form we choose, as ultimately all

prayers and adoration goes to this Cosmic Principle, Ishvara through the form of Shiva, Vishnu, Devi and all the million devatas that we have within the Hindu tradition. This vision of the Hindus cannot be further improved as it transcends the experience and knowledge that we humans possess. This Brahman which is beyond speech can only be understood through the teachings of our scriptures. For this reason, scriptural learning is indeed indispensable as it throws light on realities that cannot be understood by our limited minds.

The beauty of the final vision of God as Ishvara becomes tangible through a form i.e. Devata. The Ishvara beyond the reach of speech and words becomes known through speech and words as revealed in the scriptures. Likewise the Ishta Devata indeed becomes the medium for us to 'reach' Ishvara who is beyond the reach of our sense organs and minds. In this vision of the Infinite reality, all the devatas become part of it. There cannot be any particle away from this Ishvara as it is the Whole. Hence, even temple worship and puja become a means to relate with this Supreme Reality which has no single form and at the same time the sum total of all forms. The tradition of the Hindus which ultimately concludes that God is indeed One without name and form, allows us to worship God through the very names and forms created by the very Ishvara. This is the unique vision of the Hindus. The Hindus are not afraid of diversity because they know that behind the varied forms there is only One and that is God, Ishvara.

TYPES OF DEVOTEES

Four types of Devotees worship or seek Me, O Arjuna.

They are: the Arta, Artharthi, Jijnasu & the Jnani.

- Bhagavad Gita 7.16

In Hinduism devotees are called Bhaktas. In fact all Hindus are indeed Bhaktas, in spite of the lack of awareness that may be in the hearts of most Hindus. But who is a Bhakta? A person who does not believe in God can never be a Bhakta. Neither can a person be one if he engages in wrong deeds. So a Bhakta has to be a person who possesses a unique attitude, be it towards God or the world he lives in. And this attitude with which a Bhakta relates with God and the world he lives in is called Bhakti. The Hindu scriptures teach that this attitude of Bhakti is instantaneously born the moment one understands one's position in the world.

For example, we certainly know that there are many things in the world which are beyond our control. The sun rises and sets without our permission. The earth was here way before we were born. In fact even to have a good healthy physique at birth is itself something over which we have no control. We can conclude that we are subject to the laws of nature and not vice versa. And these laws of nature were not created by us but ordained by a higher power which has created them and rules them. Even our breath doesn't seek our permission when it takes its leave. Given this appreciation one sees oneself as someone who is insignificant and capable of accomplishing limited goals when compared with the Universe. The Hindu tradition points out that this higher power which has created all that we see is Ishvara or God and that he (or she) is the ruler and in-dweller of this universe. This is a unique knowledge gained from the Hindu scriptures. With this knowledge I can conclude that I am indeed a part of this world of which the ruler is Ishvara. When this appreciation takes place in our minds, the Bhakta is born immediately. The recognition of this greater Being who has created me and the world I live in gives rise to this attitude of Bhakti. A person bereft of this attitude cannot be called a Bhakta.

However, in spite of having this Bhakti, Bhaktas are different in the way they relate with Ishvara. Based on this relationship alone does Lord Krishna tells Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita that there are different types of Bhakta. In the verse quoted above, we can discover the mutual relationship between Ishvara and his (her) devotees.

Let's now look at the different type of Bhaktas and how they relate with Ishvara. In the above verse Krishna says that there are four types of devotees. They are namely the Arta, Artharthi, Jijnasu & the Jnani. Let's now understand the Arta.

Arta is a Bhakta who only thinks about Ishvara when in distress. Bhaktas of this type are generally people who think of God only when something unwanted and unfortunate happens to oneself. This can be typical of Bhaktas who may suddenly start praying or visiting Temples to gain release from an unfortunate situation they are in. An example would be a person who starts visiting the temple to remove his Doshas due to the effects of the Navagrahas. This is the first type of Bhakta.

The second type of Bhakta is the Artharthi. The **Artharthi** is someone who looks up to the Lord to accomplish material pursuits. This type of Bhakta thinks of Ishvara as a provider who brings forth fortune and securities. A typical example would be a person who starts thinking about God only when there is a need for money, fame, property, enjoyment or even matrimony.

The third type of Bhakta is the **Jijnasu**. A Jijnasu is a person who desires to understand the nature of Ishvara. This type of Bhaktas make their prime pursuit the discovery about the Knowledge of Ishvara. They study scriptures and take to the worship of Ishvara only to gain Ishvara. It is worthwhile to know that while he may conduct his daily affairs just like the rest, his goal, Ishvara, never vanishes from his mind.

The fourth type of Bhakta is the **Jnani**. There is nothing much to be said of this Bhakta because he is indeed part of Ishvara. This is the liberated man our scriptures laud as Jivanmukta, Siddha or

Jnani. He is free from sorrow and he has crossed the ocean of births and deaths. He reminds us of the final goal of Human life which is Moksha.

Among them the Jnani, who is ever united with Me and whose devotion is single minded, is the best. Because, I am very dear to the wise, and the wise is very dear to Me.

- Bhagavad Gita 7.17

The gradation of the four types of Bhaktas are inevitable as each of them have an evolved vision of Ishvara. The vision of the Artharthi is more evolved when compared with the Arta. And the desire of the Jijnasu is more evolved than the Artharthi's. And the Vision of Jnani is the culmination of the desire of the Jijnasu. When Krishna says that the Jnani is indeed dear to him, it comes to show that the Jnani is not separable from Ishvara, because he is indeed part of Him.

In spite of such gradations from the standpoint of the Bhaktas, from the standpoint Ishvara, all of them are indeed His Bhaktas. In spite of the eminence of the Jnani, Krishna also addresses the rest also Bhaktas and most importantly **noble**. This shows the impartiality of Ishvara towards all Bhaktas as they all equal to him because all of them recognise the existence of Ishvara and the relationship between the world, Ishvara and oneself.

METHODS OF WORSHIP

Devotion is an emotion shown towards God. Any emotion is nurtured when it is expressed by action. **Worship** is an action when one express his devotion and symbolizes his recognition of Ishvara in his life as the invisible hand of grace. When an aspirant accepts his limitations and surrender his ego to Ishvara, he starts worshipping Ishvara to seek his anugraha (grace or blessing). Worship is an important element in Sanathana Dharma.

Bhakthi considers God as One, with or without a form, but as one who incorporates many divine feelings. Mere belief cannot be called Bhakthi. Bhakthi is an attitude (bhavana) which helps to invoke a devotee in the person and the presence of Ishvara in the form. Worshipping with proper understanding of the true nature of Ishvara alone is the highest form of communication with Ishvara.

Scriptures being the means of knowledge, reveal the various methods of worship, rituals, meaning and benefits one derive from it. The methods differ according to the maturity of the seekers or bhaktas. There are two types of worship.

1. Ragha Bhakthi
2. Vaidheya Bhakthi

Ragha Bhakthi : Total surrender to Ishvara and worship without any form of expectation in return is known as Ragha Bhakthi. Just as a mother serves the child without expecting anything in return, devotees worship Ishvara. This is considered the best form of devotion, as the devotee understands the all pervasive nature of Ishvara being manifested in all the forms of the universe and worship at all times. The great Saiva Saints - Kannappa Nayanar, Sakiya Nayanar and Vaishnava Saints Bhaktha Thuka Ram, Meera Bai, are few who can be mentioned for expressing Ragha Bhakthi towards Ishvara. However, an ordinary man may not have the bhakthi of the mentioned saints. Hence, methodical worship helps one to cultivate this bhakthi which is called Vaidheya Bhakthi.

Vaidheya Bhakthi : A set of discipline as prescribed by the scriptures has to be followed in this type of worship. Undertaking any discipline involves diligence, perseverance and single pointedness in one's pursuit. Worship can be either physical, verbal and mental and it can be a public or a personal affair.

Personal worship : In this form of worship, one can see a mixture of Physical, Verbal and Mental actions. Physical actions take the form of the two most important Hindu rituals Yagna and Puja. Various forms of Yagnas and a detailed puja has been prescribed in the Scriptures.

In a puja, one treats the Lord as an honoured guest, offers worship and with reverence seeks the Lord's blessings. In Puja the devotion is expressed in all the three forms of actions. Offering of flowers, lighting of the lamps etc are Physical forms of worship. Chanting of Shlokas and Mantras – verbal form of worship while Japa and Meditation are the mental form worship.

Thus, in a puja, a devotee is able to express his devotion in 3 levels and this form of worship is considered as one of the most complete form of worship. The five elements viz, space, air, water, earth and fire is symbolically expressed in our offering as flowers, incense, light, food and sandalwood paste.

Puja when done with proper attitude and complete devotion is able to guide one towards God by bringing the worshipper and the Worshipped closer.

Temple worship

The Hindu temples are built for congregational worship as it promotes unity in the society. Temples are designed as per the Agama scriptures to enhance the spiritual values and have scientific merit by its construction, location and the rituals that are traditionally performed. Temples help individuals to induce pious and chaste thoughts and create a feeling of peace and calmness within oneself and this is due to the mantras chanted in the temples. It is the place for collective worship as it plays an important role in cultivating the spiritualism

in people. The absolute necessity of the temple worship is stressed throughout by the great saints of the religion.

As Hindu temples play a very significant role in religious, social and educational aspects, it is apt to have some discipline to be followed in the temples so that the real benefits of worship can be reaped, which also demands that one must enter the temple with pure thoughts, words, deeds and physique.

Listed below are the five steps which a devotee is expected to follow during temple worship :

Darshanam (Vision of Deity) :

On seeing the form of the Lord in the temple, one should be alert and conscious of the presence of the Lord. The forms of the deities helps the devotee to arrest his mind and aids in concentrating on the one reality behind many manifestations. The mind should be focused on the Lord like the dust of iron that sticks to the magnet. A worship with such an orientation would have very good effect in oneself by the grace of the Ishvara. The atmosphere and the objects in the temple evokes a kind of spirituality within the devotees as everything is associated with Divine in the temple.

Sthuthi (Hymns) :

This refers to the worship in the form of prayers which include recitation of mantras, shlokas, bhajans, kirtans and reciting the names of the Lord and singing his glories.

Pradhakshinam (Circumambulation) :

Refers to circumambulating and saluting the deities in the temple. The circumambulation would be done at least for three times. One has to circumambulate following certain rules by taking every step slowly with great care and folded hands. At the same time, Lord's name or shloka has to be chanted with deep devotion, realizing the meaning of the chants.

Japam (Chanting of Lord's name mentally) :

Upon completing Pradhakshinam, one has to sit next to the flag

post to do Japa. Japa refers to the constant repetition of Mantras or recitation of Lord's name for 108 times. Japa will result in a focused mind and one-pointed concentration. For chanting, one can use Japa Mala.

Namaskram (Prostration) :

After doing Japa, one has to prostrate in front of the flag post (*dwajastambham*). Prostration signifies humility. Men perform "eight-limbed obeisance" (*ashtanga namaskaram*) and women perform devotees "five-limbed obeisance" (*Panchanga namaskaram*) respectively.

Though worship is performed in many different ways, the ultimate goal of a devotee is to have a life free from conflict between his duties and conscience. For this purpose, a person seeks Lord's grace by worship so that he can dedicate all his / her actions as offerings to Ishvara.

Salutations to Rajagopuram (Main Tower) :

When one looks at the Rajagopuram, salute it with an understanding, that Ishwara is manifested in all the forms of this Universe. In Rajagopuram, the statues of all forms including deities are sculpted to symbolically represent the all pervasiveness of Ishwara.

Salutations to Kodi maram (Flag Post) :

The top of the flag post represents Ishwara. Nandi in the flag represents Jivatama and the rope represents the bondage of Jiva in this universe. When one salute the flag post, should remind that he has to cross the bondage to merge oneself with Ishwara.

Salutations to Bali Peetam (Sacrificial pedestal) :

Salute the Bali peetam with the thought of surrendering one's ego at the feet of Ishwara and enter the temple only as a devotee.

Sri Vinayakar

Vakrathunda Mahaa Kaaya Surya Koti Samaprabha !
Nirvighnam Kurume deva sarva Kaaryeshu Sarvadaa !!

“O, Lord Ganesha of the curved trunk and massive body, the one whose splendor is equal to millions of Suns, please bless me so that I do not face any obstacles in all my endeavours.”

Sri Muruga

Shadaananam Kunkuma raktha varnam
Mahaamathim divya mayura vaahanam !
Rudhrasya sunum sura sainya naatham
Guham sadhaa sharanamaham prapadhye !!

I always take shelter in the six faced lord who is of red colour, like saffron, the intelligent, mounted on the divine peacock, son of Rudra and the chief of the army of Gods.

Sri Idumbar

Om Indumbaaya Namaha !
Salutations to Idumbar.

Sri Nandhikeshwarar

Nandhikesha Mahaa bhaaga Shivadhyana paraayana !
Uma shankara sevartham anugnaam dhaathu marhasi !!

Oh revered Nadikesha, who is always intent on meditating on Lord Shiva, kindly permit me to worship Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvathi.

Sri Shiva

Rudhram pashupatim sthaanum nilakantam umaapathim !
Namaami shirasaa devam kim no mrityuh karishyati !!

I prostrate to Lord Siva, in the form of Rudra, Pasupati, Sthanu, Nilakantha & Umapati, who helps me transcend mortality.

Sri Shakthi

Sarva mangala maangalye shive sarvaartha saadhake !
Saranye thryambake gouri naaraayani namosthu the !!

Salutations to you, O Devi, who is the auspiciousness of all that is

auspicious, who is the consort of Lord Siva, who is the means of accomplishing all desires, who is the refuge of all, who is three-eyed and who is the fair-complexioned one.

Sri Sarasvathi

Sarasvathi namasthubhyam varadhe kaamarupini !
Vidhyaarambam karishyaami siddhir bhavathu me sadha !!

Salutations to you, O Goddess Sarasvathi, who is the giver of boons, and who has a beautiful form ! I begin my studies. Let there be success for me always.

Sri Lakshmi

Namasthesthu mahaamaaye shripite surapujithe !
Shankha chakra gadhaa hasthe mahaalakshmi namosthu the !!

Salutations to you, O mahalakshmi, who is all power, who is the seat of wealth, who is worshipped by the gods and who has a shell, a disc and a mace in her hands.

Sri Durga

Sarvaswarupe Sarveshi Sarva Shakthi Samanvithe !
Bhayebhyas thraahino Devi Durge Devi Namosthuthe !!

Salutations to Goddess Durga who is all pervasive, (omni-present), all knower and all powerful and who saves the devotees from all kinds of fears.

Sri Kaali

Jwaalaakaraala mathyugram Asesha Asura Sudhanam !
Trishulam Paathuno Bhiithehe Bhadra Kaali Namosthuthe !!

Oh Goddess Kali, one with a fierce form, destroyer of Demons, holder of Trisula, save us from the fears and miseries of life.

Sri Krishna

Vasudevasutham devam kamsa chaanura mardhanam !
Devaki paramaanandham krishnam vande jagadgurum !!

I salute Krisna, the Lord, the teacher of the world, son of Vasudeva, destroyer of Kamsa and Canura and the greatest joy of Devaki.

Sri Narayana

Namas samastha bhuthaanaam aadhi bhuthaaya bhubhrthe !
Aneka rupa rupaaya vishnave prabha vishnave !!

Salutations to Lord Vishnu, who is the creator of all beings, the sustainer of the creation, whose form is all forms, who is all pervasive, and who is self-effulgent.

Sri Rama

Raamaaya Raamabhadraaya Raamachandraaya vedhase !
Ragunaathaaya Naathaaya sithaayah pathaye namah !!

Salutations unto Lord Rama, who is auspiciousness, who is in the form of the shining light (consciousness present in all beings), who is the creator, who is the Lord of the Raghu clan, the Lord of all beings and the husband of Sita.

Sri Hanuman

Manojavam Maarutha thulyavegam
Jithendriyam buddhimathaam varishtam !
Vaathaathmajam Vaanarayootha mukhyam
Sri Raamadootham Shirasaa namaami !!

Bowing my head, I salute Hanuman, who travels as fast as the mind and the wind, who has mastered his sense organs, who is the best among the intelligent, who is the son of the deity of wind, who is the commander-in-chief of the army of the vanara tribe and who is the envoy of Sri Rama.

Sri Daksinamurthy

Gurave sarvalokaanaam bhisaje bhava roginaam !
Nidhaye sarva vidhyaanaam dakshinaamurthaye namah !!

Salutations to Lord Dakshinamurti the preceptor of all (people

/ worlds), the physician of disease called samsara or physician to those afflicted by the disease samsara and store-house of all knowledge.

Sri Lingodbhavar

Om Aadhyantha Rahithaaya Namaha !

Salutations to Lord – who has no beginning and end - one who is eternal.

Sri Natarajar

Krpaasamudram sumukham thrinethram
Jataadharam paarvathi vamabhagam !
Sadaashivam rudhra manantha rupam
Chidhambaresham hrdhi bhaavayaami !!

I meditate in the heart Sadasiva the formidable (Rudra) who is the Lord of Chidambaram, the ocean of compassion, pleasing one, the three-eyed, with matted hair, having innumerable forms and who has goddess Parvati on the left side.

Sri Bhairavar

Bhuuthasangha naayakam Vishaalakirithi dhaayakam !
Kaashivaasi lokapunya paapashodhakam Vibhum !!
Nithimaarga kovidam puraathanam jagathprabum !
Kaashikapuraadhi naatha Kaalabhairavam Bhaje !!

I worship Kalabhairava, the presiding deity of Kashi, who is the primordial lord of the universe, omni-present, chief of bhuta ganas, bestower of wide fame, proficient in ethics and who determines the virtues and vices of those who dwell in Kashi.

Sri Naagar

Naagarajaaya Vidhmahe Sahasra phanaaya Dhiimahi !
Thanno Ananthah Prachodayaath !!

Salutations to Naga Rajah, protect us from all the doshas !

Sri Nalvar Potri

The four great saints are the Nayanmars or servitors who adored Lord Shiva and authored the Great Tamil Devotional Classic Songs Thevaram & Thiruvagasam.

Om Sri Jnaana Sambhanda Swamine Namaha !

Om Sri Vaagishaaya Namaha !

Om Sri Sundara Murthi Swamine Namaha !

Om Sri Manickavaachaka Swamine Namaha !

Sri Chandhikeshar

Nilakanta padaambhoja parisipuritha maanasa !

Shamboho ssevaaphalam dehi chandhiksha namosthutte !!

Oh Chandiksha, whose mind relishes thinking always the lotus feet of Neelakanta, Salutations to you, please grant the merits of the devotion to Lord Shiva.

Navagraha Stothram

Surya (SUN)

Japaakusuma sankasham kaashyapeyam mahaadhyuthim !

Thamorim sarva paapagnam pranothosmi Divaakaram !!

I pray to the Surya, the day-maker, destroyer of all sins, the enemy of darkness, of great brilliance, the descendent of Kaashyapa, the one who shines like the japaa flower.

Chandra (MOON)

Dadhishankha Thushaaraabham Ksheerodhaarnava sambhavam !

Namaami shashinam somam shambhor mukuta bhushanam !!

I pray to the Chandra who shines coolly like curds or a white shell, who arose from the ocean of milk, who has a hare on him, Soma, who is the ornament of Shiva's hair.

Angaraka (MARS)

Dharani garbha sambhutham vidyuthkaanthe samaprabham !

Kumaaram shakthi hastham tham mangalam pranamaamyaham !!

I pray to Kujan, born of Earth, who shines with the same brilliance as lightning, the young man who carries a spear.

Budha (MERCURY)

Priyangu kalika shyaamam rupena prathimam budham !

Saumyam saumya gunopetham tham budham pranamaamyaham !!

I pray to Budhan, dark like the bud of millet, of unequalled beauty, gentle and agreeable.

Guru (JUPITER)

Devaanaam cha rishinaam cha gurum kaanchana sannibham !

Buddhimantham thrilokesham tham namaami Brahmspathim !!

I pray to Guru , the teacher of gods and rishis, intellect incarnate, lord of the three worlds.

Sukran (VENUS)

Himakundha mrnaalaabham dhaithyaanaam paramam gurum !

Sarva shaasthra pravakthaaram bhaargavam pranamaamyaham !!

I pray to Sukran, the ultimate preceptor of demons, promulgator of all learning, he who shines like the fiber of snow-white.

Shani (SATURN)

Neelaanjana Samaa bhaasam raviputhram yamaagrajam !

Chaayaamaarthaanda sambhutham tham namaami shanaishcharam !!

I pray to Sani, the slow moving, born of Shade and Sun, the elder brother of Yama, the offspring of Sun, he who has the appearance of black collyrium.

Rahu

Ardhakaayam mahaaveeryam chandraadhithya vimardhanam !

Simhika garbha sambhutham tham raahum pranamaamyaham !!

I pray to **Rahu**, having half a body, of great bravery, the eclipser of the Moon and the Sun, born of Simhikaa.

Kethu

Palaasha pushpa shankaasham taarakagraha masthakam !
Raudhram raudhrathmakam ghoram tham kethum pranamahmyaham !!

I pray to **Kethu**, who has the appearance of Palaasha flower, the head of stars and planets, fierce and terrifying.

Before Leaving the temple

Kaayena vaachaa manasendhriyairvaa
Budhyaathmanaa vaa prakruthe svabhaavaath !
Karomi yadhyath sakalam parasmai
Naaraayanaayethi samarpayaami !!

Unto Lord Narayana, I dedicate all the acts that I perform with my body, speech, mind, senses and intellect which are born of deliberation or natural tendencies.

Prayer for World Peace

Svasthi prajaabhyah paripaalayanthaam
Nyaayena maargena mahim mahishaah !
Gobraahmanebhyah shubhamsthu nithyam
Lokhaas samasthaah sukhino bhavanthu !!

May the subjects be happy always : may the kings rule the earth following the righteous path : may the cattle and Brahmins be happy : may all the worlds be happy.

